

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief Ronal W. Serpas



Captain Glenn Cramer
Government and Media Relations
(360) 753-5299 – office
(360) 753-5469 – fax
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov>

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**Contact(s): Lydia Lindwell, State Department of Ecology, (360) 407-6067
Trooper Kurt Adkinson, (360) 753-0684**

Litter Fines Will Hurt Your Wallet

OLYMPIA – New fines for littering went into effect July 27, 2003. Two bills passed by the Legislature this spring change litter laws **and** raise the price you will pay if you receive a ticket for littering.

The first change creates a new category titled “potentially dangerous” litter. It includes items such as glass, hypodermic needles, lit tobacco products capable of starting a fire, and human waste—including diapers and bottles of urine. Previously, lit tobacco products carried a \$950 fine. Now, anyone tossing a lit cigarette or other “potentially dangerous” litter could face a \$1,025 fine.

“This type of litter poses a serious safety concern on our roadways,” said Washington State Patrol Chief Ronal Serpas. Washington State Fire Marshal Mary Corso added, “The potential fire hazard created by a carelessly tossed lit cigarette is very high—particularly during the dry summer season. We hope this will serve as an incentive to not litter.”

The second change reflects a general increase in civil infractions. The basic fines for littering now start at \$103, up from \$95. Failure to secure a load is \$194, up from \$171. An illegal dump site or litter in an amount greater than a cubic yard will cost up to \$5,000 and could result in possible jail time.

“Research with people who admit to littering indicated that stiff fines were a deterrent,” said Megan Warfield, state litter programs coordinator with the state Department of Ecology. “If they don’t care about the health, environmental or safety costs, we hope getting a ticket will convince those who litter to change their behavior.”

Washington’s litter problem prompted the state to launch an enforcement-themed litter prevention campaign in the spring of 2002. The “Litter and It Will Hurt” campaign focuses on how much littering can “hurt” your wallet. Campaign advertisements and materials, such as car litter bags, provide information on what the fines are.

The Washington State Patrol and other law enforcement agencies have supported the campaign through enforcement efforts. In 2002, troopers made 4,193 contacts where either a ticket or warning was issued.

More information about litter fines can be found on the litter Web site:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/litter/fines.html>

For more information on the “Litter and It Will Hurt” campaign, please visit:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/litter/campaign.html>

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